

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERALISM AND THE CENSUS
Congressman Michael R. Turner, Chairman



OVERSIGHT HEARING
STATEMENT BY MICHAEL R. TURNER, CHAIRMAN

Hearing topic: *Public Housing in the 21st Century: HUD's View on the Future of Public Housing in the United States.*

Tuesday, July 18, 2006
10:00 AM
2154 Rayburn House Office Building

OPENING STATEMENT

Welcome to the Subcommittee's hearing entitled, "*Public Housing in the 21st Century: HUD's View on the Future of Public Housing in the United States.*" This is the fifth in a series of hearings the Federalism and the Census Subcommittee is holding on public and low-income housing.

Congress first authorized the concept of public housing in 1937 as part of President Roosevelt's public works legislative package. Congress originally intended public housing to serve working families on a temporary basis. Over the years, public housing evolved into a program that served poorer families who were more likely to become long-term residents.

By the 1960s and 70s, much of the nation's public housing had fallen into disrepair and distress. By the 1980's, the public – and many in Congress – were demanding that the public housing system be reformed. Congress responded and made several minor reforms throughout

the late 1980s and early 1990s. By 1995, however, it was clear that these reforms had not done enough – far too many people still lived in public housing developments that did not provide clean, safe, and quality housing.

In 1998, Congress again responded to the problem by passing the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, also known as QHWRA. This landmark legislation was the largest overhaul of the public housing system since its creation. It was a sweeping reform of the public housing system. On many levels, it has been widely praised and has been successful. Still, no legislation is perfect and QHWRA is no different. It too has its shortcomings.

Beginning in February of this year, the Subcommittee has held four hearings to examine the viability and efficiency of the nation's assisted and public housing system. We have received testimony from a wide variety of stakeholders. These witnesses have included members of academia, public housing authority directors, non-profit housing developers, financiers, and public housing tenants. These hearings have been interesting and informative.

Our inquiry, however, is not complete. That is why we have invited the Department of Housing and Urban Development to testify before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to allow the Department the opportunity to discuss its vision for the future of public and assisted housing programs. Also, within the context of the Subcommittee's last four hearings, we have asked the Department to respond to the views and recommendations of our previous witnesses.

With that, I would like to welcome the Honorable Roy Bernardi who is Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I would also like to welcome the Honorable Orlando Cabrera who serves as Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing at HUD. Assistant Secretary Cabrera will be joining Deputy Secretary Bernardi to assist him in answering the Subcommittee's questions.

Thank you for agreeing to testify today. I welcome you both and look forward to your comments.

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